

the Jews and Judaism from contact with other religions. The Babylonian rabbis, however, did not differ from the Palestinians, but in general were applying the law of the Mishnah as best they could, though, as we have seen, in some ways extending even *its* severe views of proper isolation of Jewry from gentiles. One may conclude that, at the very least, the temper of the times was congruent to the intentions of the Mazdeans and rabbis, but that both were probably thwarted by the realities of daily life.

### III. ARMENIAN JEWRY BEFORE 300

It was in this period that St. Gregor Lusavorič [= the Illuminator] brought Christianity to Armenia<sup>1</sup>, and hence an appropriate point at which to review the data on Armenian Jews and Judaism before 300 A.D.

#### JEW IN ARMENIA

The only certainty is that there *were* Jews in Armenia<sup>2</sup> before the coming of St. Gregor Lusavorič. Both Jewish and Armenian sources attest to this fact.

We shall consider below (pp. 348-352) Armenian legends on the Jewish origins of certain noble Armenian families. Here we shall limit our examination to demographical information.

#### A. Before Tigranes

Tournebize holds that the Assyrians deported Jews directly to Armenia, and not merely to the Khabur valley. Aslan says, likewise, that the Jews of Samaria were deported to Armenia, and that those found around Lake Urmiah were descended from the northern Israelites.<sup>3</sup> According to Tournebize, they were settled in the valley of the Araxd river, between Migri and Yerivan. I am unable however to locate the original sources on the basis of which these statements are made. As we shall note, the Bagratuni were allegedly settled at Nisibis ca. 150 B.C., according to Xorenazī I, 8, 22 and II, 3.

#### B. Tigranes' Deportations

Armenian historians, following Moses Xorenazī, hold that Tigranes II

<sup>1</sup> The following is a somewhat revised version of my paper in *JAOS* 84, 3, 1964, 230-240. See also Salo W. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1952) II, 404-5, ns. 36-7; I, 169, 283, 372, and II, 165-204. On the conversion of Armenia, see A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient II. Early Monasticism in Mesopotamia and Syria* (Louvain 1960) 353-8, and S. Rapoport, *Erekb Milin* (Prague, 1852), 205-6.

<sup>2</sup> On Jews in Kurdistan, see especially Abraham Ben-Ya'akov, *Jewish Communities of Kurdistan* (Jerusalem, 1961, in Hebrew), pp. 9-11, and J. Obermeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 132; S. Rapoport, *Kerem Hemed* VI, 172; on Abraham in Kurdistan, b. B.B. 91a; see also Hul. 54b, Men. 29a, Pes. 7a. On Jews in Iberia, see Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1946), VI, 447, n. 52. See also Asahel Grant, *The Nestorians* (N. Y. 1841), esp. 153ff.

<sup>3</sup> Tournebize, *Histoire politique et religieuse de l'Arménie* (Paris, 1900), p. 759; Aslan, *Études historiques sur le peuple Arménien* (Paris, 1928), p. 59, n. 1.

deported Jews from Palestine to Armenia. Tigranes invaded Syria, and probably northern Palestine as well. Alexander Jannaeus's<sup>1</sup> widow, Alexandra, bribed him to spare Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> In the course of his campaign, he took a number of Jewish prisoners back to Armenia, and settled them in the following places:

<i>Place</i>	<i>Source</i>
Armavir . . . . .	Xorenazi II, 16, 49
Vartkes on R. Kassagh = Vagharšabat	Xorenazi II, 16, 49, III, 35. Compare on Vagharšabat II, 65; Ardzruni I, 9
Semiramis = Van (Hyrcanus and party)	Xorenazi II, 19 Faustus IV, 55
Artashat . . . . .	Ardzruni I, 9 Xorenazi II, 39, II, 65 Faustus IV, 55
Van-Dosp . . . . .	Xorenazi III, 35 Faustus IV, 55 Ardzruni I, 9

By implication, Faustus of Byzantium held that the following places likewise received their Jewish populations under Tigranes: Yerovandašat, Sarehavan, Sarišat, and Nachdšavan. A large Jewish population was, therefore, allegedly settled in Armenia from the first century B.C. One of the cities, Vartkes, became an important commercial center (Xorenazi II, 65).

#### *C. Migrations After Tigranes*

According to Xorenazi (II, 49), in the early second century Ardashes removed the Jews who were settled in Yerevan (and who had originally been settled in Armavir), and established them at Artashat.

#### *D. Shapur's Deportations in ca. 365 A.D.*

According to Faustus (IV, 55) and Xorenazi (III, 35), the Persians deported thousands of Jewish families from Armenia, and resettled them at Isfahan, as part of their effort to strip Armenia of its economic and demographic resources, and reduce it to a Persian dependency. They are as follows:

<sup>1</sup> For the conference of Parthian ambassadors and Alexander Jannaeus in Jerusalem, see y. Ber. 7.2, Nazir 5.3; N. C. Debevoise, *Political History of Parthia* (Chicago, 1938), pp. 94-5; E. I. Szadzunski, "Talmudical Writings as a Source for Parthian and Sassanid History," *JAOI* 52 (1932), 305 f. and Vol. I, p. 25-6.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, *War* I, 116, *Antiquities* 16, 429-20, and also A. Schalit, *Herod the King* (in Hebrew, Jerusalem, 1960) 13, 345, ns. 5-7; and E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* etc. (Edinburgh 1890), I, i, 311. There is no question that between 83 and 69, the Hasmonaeans were vassals of Armenia. See also J. Sandaljian, *Histoire Documentaire de l'Arménie* (Rome, 1917), II, 457; H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig, 1905), III ii, 373; IV, 334; Tournebize, *op cit.*, p. 27.

<i>City</i>	<i>Number of Jewish Families deported</i>		<i>Number of Armenian Families deported</i>
Artašat	9,000		40,000
Vagharšabat		19,000 in all	
Yerovandašat	30,000		20,000
Sarehavan	8,000		5,000
Sarišat	14,000		10,000
Van in Dosp	18,000	(Ardzruni: 5,000)	15,000
Nachdšavan	16,000		2,000

Ardzruni reports slightly different figures (I, 9): from Van in Dosp, 5,000 Jews and 18,000 Christians were exiled to Isfahan. The credibility of these figures is not great, but their implication is entirely acceptable, namely, that very large numbers of Jews lived in Armenia by the end of the 4th century, and doubtless for considerable time before that. These Jews were economically so important that the Persians brought them into their own territories to strengthen their economy.

#### *E. The Credibility of Xorenazī on Tigranes' Deportations*

Jacob Obermeyer<sup>1</sup> rejects Xorenazī's traditions on the deportation of Jews to Armenia, and Faustus's statements on Shapur's expulsions as well. He argues that Josephus reports that Tigranes never came to Palestine, but only to Ptolemais (Akko), and then retreated to Armenia and hence could not have deported Jews northward. Even if Tigranes did not enter Judea because of Alexandra's submission, however, he could very well have deported Jews from Galilee and Syria, which he did hold. Further, Obermeyer argues that if such deportations had taken place, Josephus would have reported them. One cannot refute an argument from silence. Obermeyer says that Xorenazī's "tendency" was to make Tigranes into a second Shalmanassar or Nebuchadnezzar, and thus was motivated to "invent" the deportations. Xorenazī and other historians, however, repeatedly discuss Jews in Armenian cities; are wholly consistent about their presence; tell us that some Jews moved from one place to another; and generally do not leave the impression that all of this is part of the effort to magnify Tigranes' achievements. On the contrary, to them it was simply a fact, so far as we can tell, that Jews had been deported by Tigranes. Obermeyer may very well deny the historicity of Xorenazī's account. But one must surely recognize the marks of an etiology. If Xorenazī is repeating a myth about Jewish deportations, it was a myth intended to explain a *fact* that must have been self-evident to the Armenian historians: Jews *were* in Armenia, and were later on deported (from eastern Armenia) by the Persians. How did they get there? "Under Tigranes they were deported from Palestine." I think Obermeyer's willingness to reject *all* of the Xorenazī traditions, a willingness

<sup>1</sup> In *Die Landschaft Babylonien*, p. 296, n. 1. Compare Baron, *op. cit.*, I, 204; II 169, and 404, n. 36.

characteristic of others as well, is hardly reasonable. If one begins with the assumption that all we have is legends, then one needs, at the very least, to explain the origins of the legends themselves, and the reasons why people found it possible to believe in their factuality.

Obermeyer argues, also, that the Talmud knows nothing about a Jewish settlement around Susiana or in Isfahan in Shapur's period; nor does it, in fact, even mention Isfahan. This proves absolutely nothing about whether Jews were, or were not, in Isfahan. The Talmud does not tell us that there were Jews in Dura-Europos or in Seleucia or in India or in Afghanistan or in numerous other places outside the limits of Babylonia. Further, as Obermeyer himself points out (p. 105-6 and compare Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'Empire Perse* [Paris, 1907], p. 7), the Talmud thinks that "Babylonia" was coextensive with all of the regions across the Euphrates; it does not distinguish between Babylonia and Mesopotamia, or Characene, or Mesene; and is hardly authoritative on Middle Eastern geography. Further, Obermeyer himself reports the persistence, even into Islamic times, of rumors about Jews in the 'land of Ararat,' and rejects them all. One hardly needs to accept all traditions at face value, but can hardly achieve very much by rejecting them out of hand.

The consistency of Xorenazī (in II, 49) is most impressive to me. He was aware that the Jews in Armavir were transplanted before the first century to Yerovand, and then moved, by Ardashes, to Ardashat when he was rebuilding the city. This, it seems to me, is conclusive evidence that Xorenazī was dealing with historical and not merely legendary traditions, for he did not need to invent a myth about the *subsequent* movement of the Jews settled in Armavir by Tigranes. He did not, in fact, need to discuss them at all. Yet in II, 49, he supplies substantial information, which is, at least, wholly consistent with other details he gives at widely separated points. All this is said entirely *en passant*; Tigranes plays no role in the narrative; and Xorenazī had no reason to include such a detail, or to forge it so that it would be consistent with information he provides, again entirely *en passant*, elsewhere. I conclude, therefore, that while Xorenazī's traditions on the resettlement of Jews in Armenia by Tigranes the Great may, in the main, be historically unreliable, in any case Jews were certainly settled in Armenia well before 300 A.D.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Faustus' statistics may be exaggerated, but by no means ought we reject them entirely. The Jews' numbers were probably augmented over the centuries between ca. 60 B.C. and 365 A.D. by natural increase, new settlement, and conversion. Having settled in a relatively few places, they may well in time have come to form the majority of the local population, as they did in Babylonia in some areas in which they were found.

Geo Widengren, ["The Status of the Jews in the Sassanian Empire,"

<sup>1</sup> See also M. St. Martin, *Mémoires*, on the various cities mentioned in the text. Artashat is Artaxates (I, 117-8), and was destroyed by Nero and rebuilt by Ardashes II at the end of the 1st century A.D.; Vagharšabat was the ancient capital of Armenia, I, 115; II, 367, 419; Yerovandašat was founded in the first century A.D. after Armavir was abandoned, I, 120, 296. On Sarišat, see I, 106; Nachdšavan, a city in Vaspuragan, see I, 126-32; II, 103, 225; on Armavir, I, 123-4, 161, 207; on Vartkes-Vagharšabat, I, 115.



*Iranica Antiqua* I, 1961, 117-162, esp. pp. 134-139], gives a full transcription of the Xorenazi and Faustus of Byzantium sources cited here. He corrects the text, and provides additional citations on the devastations of Shapur II [see especially p. 135-6 n. 1]. On pp. 137-9, Widengren discusses the exile of Jews by Tigranes the Great, and analyzes in great detail Xorenazi's account. Widengren does not accept Xorenazi's account of deportation of Jews from Palestine by Tigranes, but he does regard the existence of Jewish settlement in Armenia from Tigranes' time as a *fact*, to be explained by deportations from Syria to Tigranocerta.

#### F. Jewish Sources on Jews in Armenia

Jewish sources of the Talmudic period, particularly the Targum and Midrash, casually refer to the presence of Jews in Armenia. While the Targum consistently interprets Ararat to mean Kurdistan (Gorduene) and not Armenia proper, it refers specifically to Armenia in verses where the original Hebrew does not.

The Targum on Ararat is as follows:

Genesis 8:4:

אנקלוס: ונחת תיבותא . . . על טורי קרדו  
ינתן: ונחת תיבותא . . . על טורי דקרדון. שום טוורא חד קרדניא ושום  
טוורא חד אכפניא.

Isaiah 37:38:

ואינן אשתובן לארעא קרדו  
(ארץ אררט = Hebrew)

Jeremiah 51:27:

מלכות ארעא דקרדו משרית הורמיני והדייב

Thus the Targum consistently understands Ararat to be Gorduene, and not Armenia.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Targum on Amos 4.3 is as follows:

יגלוק יתכן להלאה מן טורי הרמיני

Amos was thus understood to say that the Ten Tribes, or part of them, were exiled to Armenia. Likewise, the Targum on Micah 7.12, which follows, understood that the prophet predicted the return of exiles from Armenia Major:

בעדנא ההיא יתכנשן גלותא דמן אתור וקררי תוקפא  
ודמן הורמיני רבתא וקררי צירא ועד פרת . . .

It is evident, therefore, that the Targum considered that Jews then lived in Armenia, and were referred to by Amos and Micah.<sup>2</sup>

A Midrashic passage, in Lamentations Rabbati on Lam. 1.14 (II, 42), re-

<sup>1</sup> On Ararat as Kurdistan/Gorduene, see L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1946), VI, 186, n. 48.

<sup>2</sup> The Targum on Jer. 51:27, which says that Armenia and Adiabene will be allied with the Kurds in a war on Babylonia is of interest. Adiabene was converted to Judaism in the middle of the first century A.D., and one may speculate that the "war on Babylonia" referred to by Jeremiah would, according to the interpretation of the Targum, be waged, in fact, by Jews in alliance with "Scythians."

ported that the exiles from the southern kingdom were also taken by way of Armenia, though it contains no hint that some settled there. It is as follows:

"The yoke of my transgressions is impressed [שקט] by his hand" (Lam. 1.14): He carefully considered [שקט] from שקט how to bring calamity upon me. He said, "If I exile them by the way of the desert, they will perish from hunger. I will therefore banish them by the way of Armenia, where there are towns and cities, so that food and drink will be available for them."

A parallel Armenian tradition is discussed below, p. 349.

Ezra was reputed to have founded a synagogue in Nisibis, and another in Ararat.<sup>1</sup> Such a story would suggest that people thought Ezra visited the northern tribes, perhaps on his way to Palestine. We have, of course, no way to verify it. The traditions on the antiquity of some of the Babylonian and Mesopotamian synagogues are of considerable interest, especially where they fit into previously-known details. Since there were Jews in Nisibis, it is entirely plausible that some supposed Ezra visited them en route to Palestine, for one of the normal trade routes, particularly before the founding of Palmyra, led northwestward via Nisibis.

We may note, finally, that the Ten Tribes were exiled to a point near the borders of Armenia, to Halah and to the Khabur river valley in the Assyrian province of Gosan, as well as to Media. From these points, further migration into Armenia was wholly feasible, and behind the traditions of the Targum, and of Moses Xorenazi on the settlement of Jews in Armenia in the biblical period must lie the fact that Israelites had been deported nearby. Furthermore, we know that in the first centuries B.C. and A.D., large numbers of Jews lived in and around Nisibis, on the borders of Armenia, and that they gave substantial funds for the support of the Temple in Jerusalem, so that a Temple authority, Judah b. Bathyra, had to be stationed in Nisibis to oversee the transfer of Temple funds to Jerusalem. These Jews were most likely the descendants of the Ten Tribes of Northern Israel, since the Judeans were transferred to the south and settled in Babylonia.<sup>2</sup> To summarise: The passages cited from Armenian and Jewish literature provide a reasonable basis on which to infer that Jews did, in fact, live in Armenia before 300 A.D., although we may reserve judgment on their detailed information about where Jews lived. The Targum could not have interpreted Amos' and Micah's predictions to mean that the Israelites would be sent to, and redeemed from, Armenia unless some Jews were actually living there. The fact that a large Jewish population lived in and around Nisibis, which was held by Armenia under Tigranes and afterward, until the

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, VI, 447, n. 54, from *Gelilot Erez Yisrael*, 100a.

<sup>2</sup> See II Kings 17.6, and compare also I Chronicles 5.26. Halah was near Carrhae (II Kings 18.11 Haran), and Khabur, the river, was the site of the later city of Nisibis. Armenia was also identified with "the river that went out from Eden," see Philo, *Questions on Genesis*, I, 12; that river was said to rise in the Armenian mountains. On the Ten Tribes in Nisibis and the Khabur river valley, see E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* (Edinburgh, 1890), II, ii. 223-5, and Vol. I, 13-14. On R. Judah b. Bathyra in Nisibis as a Temple Agent, Vol. I, pp. 43-8. See also b. Yev. 16b on II Kings 18.11, and also Rapoport, *op. cit.*, I, 205.

middle of the first century, is also significant, for it explains how further migration may have augmented the number of Jews brought by earlier deportations.

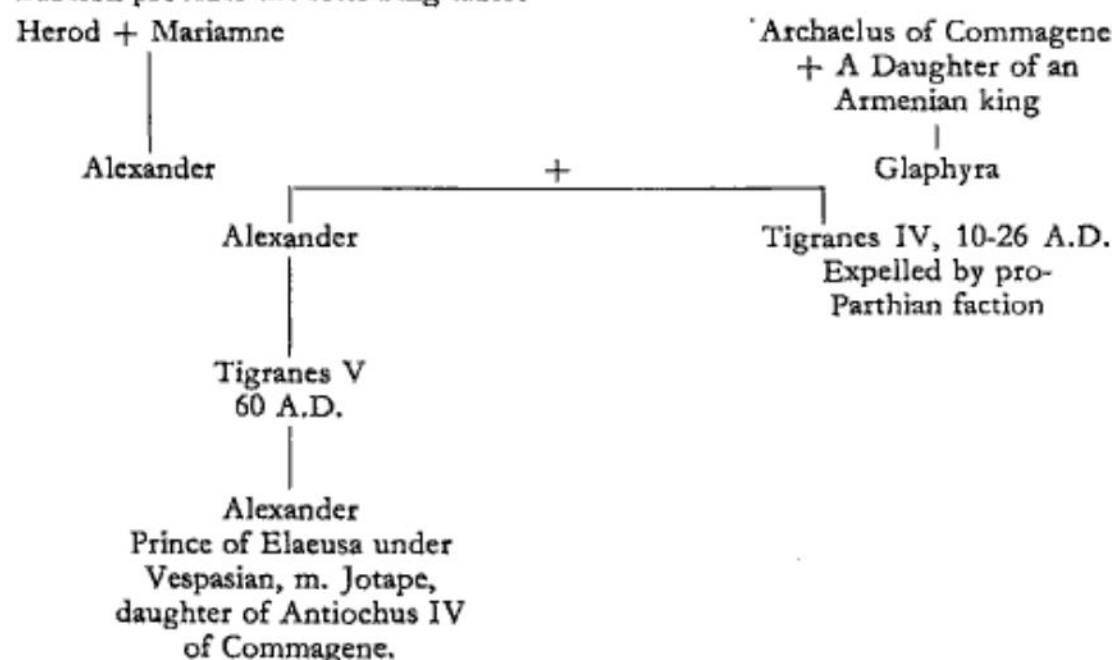
#### *G. Armenia's Jewish Dynasty*

For a few years during the first century A.D., Armenia was ruled by a dynasty of Jewish origin. The Romans imposed these rulers, who were of the house of Herod, as part of their effort to make use of the loyal Herodians to govern Middle Eastern principalities under their influence. Greater Armenia was ruled for a time by Tigranes IV, son of Alexander, Herod's son, and a daughter of Archaelaus, king of Cappadocia. A second Herodian, Tigranes V was imposed by Nero, who also placed Aristobulus, son of Herod of Chalcis, grandson of Herod the Great, on the throne of Lesser Armenia. All had, however, deserted Judaism, or at least, were not regarded by Josephus as good Jews, and their presence on the Armenian throne had no discernible consequence for the history either of the Jews or of Judaism in Armenia. The dates for Tigranes IV were 10-26 A.D.; Tigranes V, 60 A.D., and for Aristobulus ca. 60 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. ARMENIAN JUDAISM

We have no reliable information on the religion of Armenian Jewry. Xorenazî's stories on the *gradual* assimilation of the Bagratuni family to Armenian paganism (II, 14, 24), which we shall consider below, do provide credible, but not very reliable evidence about Armenian Judaism. The Talmud contains the names Rabbi Armenia (אַרְמֵינָא), [y. M.Q. 3.5], and R. Jacob of Armenia (ר' יעקב ארמניא), [y. Git. 6.5] who may be the same person as R. Jacob of Adiabene (ר' יעקב חדייבא) [b. B.B. 26b]. We also know

<sup>1</sup> See Josephus, *War*, II, 222, 252; *Antiquities* 18.5.4; Tacitus, *Annals*, II, 3; and especially E. Babelon, *Rois de Syrie, Commagène, et Arménie* (Paris, 1890), pp. cci. Babelon provides the following table:



of a R. Ya'agov Mina'ah (מִינָאֵה) [b. Meg. 23a, Hul. 84a]. We have no way of further identifying these men, or of knowing whether they came from Armenia at all. They are associated with the following Talmudic rabbis: R. Armenia with R. Mana; R. Jacob of Armenia is cited by R. Nahman; R. Jacob of Adiabene asks a question of R. Hisda; and R. Jacob Mina'ah is associated with R. Judah and Rava. None says anything on a matter discussed by any of the others. Ginzberg<sup>1</sup> doubts that R. Jacob Armenaya had anything to do with Armenia. All one can say is whether R. Jacob Armenaya was or was not from Armenia, whether he was or was not identical with R. Jacob of Adiabene, and whether the others noted above did or did not come from Armenia. Armenian Jewry had no impact whatever on Babylonian Judaism, and I suspect that the converse was also true. If any Armenian Jews, apart from the ones above, studied in the Babylonian academies, or in the nearby academy at Nisibis, we know nothing about them. Some may have gone to Nisibis (accounting perhaps for Jacob of Adiabene = Jacob of Armenia, if that be the case), but we cannot say for certain that they did; and in any case, no significant consequences can be discerned.

There is a report that some Armenian Jews converted to Christianity. This is stated explicitly in the *History of the Ardžruni*, 1, 9, in reference to Shapur's deportations. From Van-Dosp, some 5,000 Jews and 18,000 Christians were deported, and from Vagharšabat and Artashat, Jews who had been converted to Christianity at the time of St. Gregory Lusavorič were likewise deported, and suffered on account of their religion. Moses Xorenazī is the source of the Ardžruni historian, for he reports (III, 35) that the Jews, settled at Artashat and Vagharšabat, and converted by St. Gregory and Trdat to Christianity, were deported by Shapur II. With them went a priest, who exhorted the captives to keep firmly "the laws of Christianity," and was martyred by the Persians on that account. Xorenazī likewise implies that the Bagratuni were earlier converted to Christianity. Tobias, a Bagratuni, was the host of Thaddeus, the apostle, in his visit to Edessa; Tobias had not gone over to paganism with the rest of his family (see below, p. 350), but remained loyal to Judaism, and therefore fled to Edessa with his parents, being converted there sometime later (II, 33). Of course, the forced conversion and subsequent flight to Edessa would have taken place, according to Xorenazī's account, about 30 B.C., and Thaddeus' visit to Edessa could not have come before 40 A.D.; the account is therefore chronologically (if for no other reason!) impossible. In any case, the Abgar legend in Xorenazī has no historical value whatever.<sup>2</sup>

Judaism must have had a strong influence on those parts of pagan Armenia in which Jews had settled. Some of the leading families of the realm allegedly were Jewish. Some cities had a large Jewish population, including

<sup>1</sup> L. Ginzberg, "Armenia in Rabbinical Literature," *JE* II, s.v., p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Xorenazī's version of the Abgar affair is in II, 26-35. It is an excellent example of Xorenazī's "Armenization" of sacred history. Of special interest is the story of Helene, queen mother of Adiabene (according to Josephus) who here is represented as wife of Abgar. She took up residence in Jerusalem, passed out corn in famines, etc., just as in Josephus.



Vagharšabat, the birthplace of Gregor Lusavorič. Furthermore, apart from Cappadocia, Edessa's church was the chief center from which Christianity reached Armenia, and that church included a large number of Jewish converts and was deeply influenced by Judaism. Hence the assertion of Conybeare that Armenian Paulicianism represented, more than anything else, the "perpetuation of Jewish-Christianity in Armenia" is entirely credible. Conybeare holds, also, that the strength of Paulicianism was the direct consequence of the large Jewish population and extensive influence of Judaism Armenia before 300 A.D. While this seems plausible, I am not competent further to pursue the question.<sup>1</sup>

## V. TRADITIONS ON ARMENIA'S PART IN ISRAELITE HISTORY

A number of legends, entirely without historical foundation, center on the relationships between Armenia and Israel. Such legends are part of the corpus of traditions common to all newly-Christianized Middle Eastern peoples. They were intended to establish a direct connection between the converted nation and the Old Testament narratives. Just as the newly Hellenized nations tried to show that they were descended from Hellenic ancestors, so new Christians from Ethiopia northward tried to show that they had played a part in the sacred history of Israel.

### A. A Jewish Legend

L. Ginzberg cites a story about a war between Armenians and Joshua. The original version of the story probably concerned not Armenians but Arameans, as the reference to the Aramean general Shobach (see II Samuel 10, 16, 18) indicates. Ginzberg's text is as follows:

"Joshua's victorious course did not end with the conquest of the land. His war with the Armenians, after Palestine was subdued, marked the climax of his heroic deeds. Among the thirty-one kings whom Joshua had slain was one whose son, Shobach by name, was king of Armenia... He united the forty-five kings of Persia and Media, and they were joined by the renowned hero Japheth. The allied kings [sent a letter to Joshua]... 'Know then that in thirty days, we shall come to thee... and with us the hero Japheth...' [Joshua replied] ...'If the hero Japheth is with you, we have in the midst of us the Hero of all heroes, the Highest above all the high.' The heathen were not a little alarmed at the tone of Joshua's letter. Their terror grew when the messenger told of the exemplary discipline maintained in the Israelite army, of the gigantic stature of Joshua... At the end of seven days, Joshua appeared with twelve thousand troops. When the mother of king Shobach, who was a powerful witch, spied the host, she exercised her magic art, and enclosed the Israelite army in seven walls. Thereupon Joshua sent forth a carrier pigeon to tell his plight to Nabiah, the king of the trans-Jordanian tribes. He urged him to hasten to his aid, and bring the priest Phinehas and the sacred trumpets with him. Nabiah did not tarry. Before the relief detachment arrived, his

<sup>1</sup> See especially H. Gelzer, "Die Anfänge der armenischen Kirche," *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der kgl. Sächs. Akad.*, XLVI (1894), p. 136-9; on Paulicianism, F. C. Conybeare, trans. and ed., *The Key of Truth* (Oxford, 1898), esp. pp. c-cxvi; and on the church at Edessa, A. J. F. Klijn, *Acts of Thomas* (Leiden, 1962), pp. 30-33, Vol. I, pp. 166-9, and below, pp. 354-358.

mother reported to Shobach that she beheld a star rise out of the East against which her machinations were vain. Shobach threw his mother from the wall, and he himself was soon afterward killed by Nabiah. Meantime Phinehas arrived, and at the sound of his trumpets the walls toppled down. A pitched battle ensued, and the heathen were annihilated."<sup>1</sup>

The detail that Japheth was with the Armenians is of special interest. According to Xorenazi (II, 1), Japheth was the forefather of the Arsacids, who were "of the race of Abraham and Keturah." Thus, one must infer, Xorenazi believed that Keturah was the daughter of Japheth. A legend that the "Persians" were descendants of Japheth was also current among the Jews. At the same time, the more common tradition was that Japheth was the forefather of the Hellenes. Xorenazi's tradition on the "Persian" descendants of Japheth *via* Abraham and Keturah is thus seen to be congruent to stories told among Babylonian Jews as well. The association of Japheth, Keturah, and the Persians was made at least by the 3rd century A.D., and is evidence of the *relative* antiquity of Xorenazi's traditions on this subject.<sup>2</sup>

#### *B. Legends on the Jewish Origin of the Bagratuni*

The most important Armenian connection with Israelite sacred history was through the person of a Jew, Šambat, who allegedly settled in Armenia at the time of the Judean exile of 586, and was in the course of time raised to high estate. While the stories about Šambat and his descendants are entirely congruent with what we know of Jews in Armenia, and are consistent internally, we have no basis whatever on which to evaluate their historical reliability. I do not suppose that they are historically true. Xorenazi reports (I, 22) that Hračya, a contemporary of Nebuchadnezzar, asked the Babylonian conqueror for one of the principal Hebrew captives, by the name of Šambat, whom he led back to Armenia, and established comfortably. They say, Xorenazi continues, that from this Šambat the Bagratuni family is descended. He is not certain, however, whether the Jew gave up his religion and ac-

<sup>1</sup> Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, IV, 13 and see vol. VI, 179 n. 45 for the Hebrew sources. The Jewish source is Yalkut Re'uvani, a medieval compendium of midrashim. Xorenazi does assert that the Canaanites who fled from Joshua settled in Armenia, but otherwise there is no allusion to a war of Joshua and Armenia in Armenian sources. In any case, the legend was originally in Samaritan sources, and only crept into Jewish ones at a later date, according to Professor Gerson D. Cohen, who kindly refers to the following: Raphael Kirchheim, *כרמי שומרון: פתיחה למסכת*, chapters 26 f., pp. 68-75, and M. Gaster, "Das Buch Josua in hebräisch-samaritanischer Rezension," *ZDMG* 62 (1908), 233-4. My thanks for his comment.

<sup>2</sup> Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, V, 264-5, n. 209, cites the Yalkut Re'uvani on Gen. 26.2. Abraham married three wives, each being the daughter of a son of Noah. Sarah was a daughter of Shem, Keturah of Japheth, and Hagar of Ham. A Samaritan legend about the presence of Japheth among the council of the kings of Media and Persia suggests that Xorenazi's tradition of Japheth as an Arsacid (Persian) ancestor was known in Palestine also, and formed the basis of the inclusion of the detail of Japheth's presence in this story. Japheth is identified by Jews with the Persians (Cyrus) in b. Yoma 10a, but more commonly with the Greeks as in b. Meg. 9b. See also A. Carrière, *Notes nouvelles sources de Moïse de Khoren* (Vienna, 1893), pp. 49-53.

cepted paganism, though from a tradition he reported later (see below), it is apparent that he did *not*. Xorenazī reports that some believe that the Bagratuni are descended from Haik (the ancestor of Armenians), but this is untrue, he adds. The main proof is the name Šambaj, given by the Bagratuni to all their sons, "which is really Šambat, following their native language, Hebrew."<sup>1</sup> All one can say is that the name שִׁמְבַּתִּי is found in the 5th century, as a Levitical proper name (Ezra 10.5, Nehemiah 8.7, 11.16; Greek Σαββαθαί) though we do not know whether it was used earlier or not. Xorenazī's tradition, while it may not have served the specific interests of the Bagratuni family, most certainly did conform to his general tendency in treatment of Israelite-Armenian matters. This tendency, rather than specific historical questions, explains the tradition at hand. That one of the leading Armenian families was descended from an Israelite noble must have been highly significant to the new Christians of Armenia, who, through their feudal lords, thus participated in the flesh, as they did after the spirit, in Israelite history. To this fact, rather than to any valid genealogical record, must be ascribed the story of Šambat, Nebuchadnezzar and Hračya.

The Bagratuni family next appears in the story of the rise of Vāghāršak (= Valarsacēs) over the Macedonians, ca. 150 B.C. Vāghāršak made his capital at Nisibis (Xorenazī I, 8), where, as we have noted, large numbers of Jews were settled. He was allegedly given, by "Arsaces of Parthia," dominion over the West, including Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor [sic!]. There is no basis whatever for this assertion; if Vāghāršak ruled Nisibis, that was probably as far to the west as his power reached. Nonetheless, what is of specific interest is the story that Vāghāršak, anxious to reward the valorous services of the Jew Šambaj Bagarat, conferred upon him and his descendants the right to place the crown on the head of the king (II, 3, II, 8). He likewise gave the family the right to be called "Bagratuni," and considerable power, including the governorship of a province in the west and thousands of men at his service.<sup>2</sup> In general, this story conforms to what an Armenian king would likely have done in his western satrapy, for large numbers of Jews lived in and around Nisibis. Hence nothing in this story contradicts other information available to us; but that is all that can be said. Xorenazī adds (II, 8) that Valarsaces tried to force Šambaj Bagarat to give up the laws of Judaism and to adore idols, but upon his refusal, left him alone.

Tigranes was not so liberal. Xorenazī reports (II, 14) that Tigranes ordered his satraps to offer sacrifices to the gods, but that the Bagratuni family refused. One of its members, Assoud, had his tongue cut out. But it was not necessary for the king to order further torments, because the Bagratuni thereupon consented to eat the meat of the sacrificed animals, including pork, but not themselves to sacrifice nor to adore the idols. For this, Tigranes removed from them the command of troops, but left them their knight-

<sup>1</sup> This is probably a folk etymology, however. See Aslan, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Note that Valarsaces conferred upon him the title of prince and lord, the privilege of placing the crown on the head of the king, to call himself *Takatir* (he who places the crown), knight, and to wear a small tiara with three rows of pearls, etc., see II, 7.



hood, including the right to place the crown on the head of the monarch. Here again, one is struck by the congruence between this story and other information available to us. We know that Tigranes was about to make a Syrian campaign. It would have been important to assure himself of the loyalty of a powerful Jewish satrap, and no firmer expression of loyalty could be made than willingness to worship the national gods. For their part the Bagratuni were represented as refusing to sacrifice, but compromising by agreeing to consume some of the meat. It stands to reason that the Bagratuni family, if Jewish, would not have been so firm in the faith as the Palestinians or Babylonians. As we shall see in a moment, I think that is precisely the point: the Bagratuni were willing at first "merely" to compromise with paganism. Such evidence will not, however, support the conclusion that the Bagratuni family was, in fact, of Jewish origin, or that it was once Jewish but left the faith.

### *C. Stories about the Later Bagratuni*

Xorenazi records a later incident about the Bagratuni, in connection with the return of the high priest Hyrcanus to Herodian Jerusalem. As Josephus reports it,<sup>1</sup> Herod sent an embassy to Parthia, to retrieve Hyrcanus; it was important for him to have physical control of a rival to the throne. The Parthians acceded to his request, and Hyrcanus returned to Palestine, despite the protestations of Babylonian Jews, who feared for his safety. In 30 B.C., he was assassinated.

Xorenazi's account (II, 24-5) is much more detailed and elaborate, beginning, of course, with the "fact" that Hyrcanus had been exiled to Semiramus (see II, 19). Toward the end of his reign, Arsham had a controversy with Enanus (= Hebrew חנניה) who was a Bagratuni, and had the privilege of placing the crown on the head of the king. Enanus had allowed Hyrcanus to return to Palestine. He excused himself by saying that Hyrcanus had promised 100 talents for his deliverance, and Enanus had intended to receive the money and hand it over to the throne. Consequently Arsham sent one of Enanus's brothers, Senekias, to Palestine to collect the ransom, but Herod had already accused Hyrcanus of designs on his throne, and no ransom was forthcoming. Arsham, receiving no funds, imprisoned Enanus. At that point, Zora, head of the Kentuni family, made a speech against Enanus, accusing him of intending to rebel against Arsham, and to return to Palestine. Enanus had allegedly proposed that Zora join the conspiracy. "But I," Zora continued, "far from consenting to this, said, 'Why should we allow ourselves to be fooled by ancient traditions, half-baked fables, in believing that we are originally from Palestine?'" Arsham thereupon ordered Enanus to be tortured to force him to abandon the Jewish religion, adore the sun, and pay homage to the idols of the realm. If he did so he would be restored to his former rank. But if he refused to submit, Enanus and his family would be exterminated. One of his parents, named Saria, and his sons Saphadia and Azaria were threatened with death then and there. He agreed, with his family, to the king's wishes, whereupon he was returned to his former rank,

<sup>1</sup> War I, 433, 486, *Antiquities* XV, 11-20. See also Debevoise, *op. cit.*, 121-3.



but, still not fully trusted, sent to a distant satrapy. Thus the Bagratuni left Judaism.

What shall we make of this account? The names are in part identifiably Jewish; and the basic fact of Hyrcanus' return to Palestine is well attested. Otherwise it is a glorious fiction. Xorenazi had of his own knowledge one fact: that the Bagratuni family, believed to have been of Jewish origin, had obviously ceased to be Jewish. If a tradition came down to him, implicating the Bagratuni in the treasonable return of Hyrcanus to Palestine, he as an imaginative historian, not unfamiliar with Josephus, might well consider the normal reaction of the pagan Armenian monarch to such treason on the part of a Jewish noble. He would have demanded that the Jewish noble give up Judaism (including loyalty to Palestine) or die. One recalls the incident which Xorenazi reported in connection with Tigranes' preparation for his invasion of Palestine. Earlier, the Bagratuni were willing to give up some of the restrictions on eating flesh of pagan sacrifices, though not themselves to sacrifice. Here, a little later, the Bagratuni committed an act of folly, and in consequence had once and for all to declare allegiance to the Armenian nation and to abandon Judaism. Thus Xorenazi's intent was to present a dramatic and instructive account of how one's faith diminishes, however much he intends to hold on to it, in contact with an alien government and environment. In his own day, some Armenian nobility, already Christian, may have given thought to making a separate peace either with Zoroastrian Iran or with Orthodox Christian Byzantium. A consistent problem faced by the Armenian central government was the nobles' constant tendency to ignore the interests of Armenia in order to come to private arrangements with one of the great powers, in the expectation that they might, nonetheless, remain loyal Armenian Christians. This was, Xorenazi here implies, not possible. The paradigmatic history of Israel, which the Armenians had appropriated for their own, contained singular lessons for Armenian politics not found in Holy Scripture but in the history of the Jewish Armenian nobles themselves. What then was the foundation of Xorenazi's account, and what did he himself add? I think that he had at his disposal, in an Armenized version of the event based on Josephus, the story that Hyrcanus had been returned from Armenia to Jerusalem because of the treachery of a Jewish Armenian noble. He also knew that the Bagratunis once used the name Enanus; and, finally, he knew that they had ceased to be Jews. But for the rest, he, like other ancient historians, created a highly imaginative and appropriate narrative of events, with a clear-cut contemporary purpose in mind.

#### *D. Xorenazi on Tigranes in Jerusalem*

Xorenazi (II, 19) reports that Tigranes took Jerusalem, and deported Hyrcanus, the high priest, along with other Jews, to Armenia. His account is historically of no value whatever. First, Tigranes was dead fifteen years before Jerusalem was taken and Hyrcanus exiled; second, the city was taken not by the Armenians, who never came near it, but by the Parthians; and third, Hyrcanus was never in Armenia, but in Parthia. Xorenazi's traditions are apparently based on a garbled version of Josephus' account; all the right names (Hananel = Enanus; Pacorus) appear, but in the wrong context. He

says that the Persians and Armenians were allied against the Romans. This is quite the opposite of what happened. He identifies Pacorus as the son of the "king of Syria," while Pacorus, general of the Parthian army in Syria, was son of the Parthian *shabanshab*. He reports that Pacorus, "who was related to Antigonos," bribed Barzabran, the "Armenian-Parthian" general, to come to the aid of Antigonos in Jerusalem, in exchange for 500 women and 1,000 talents of gold. The offer was, in fact, made *to* and not *by* Pacorus, and Barzapharnes was a Parthian subordinate of his. Yet Xorenazi preserves the account of the treacherous meeting between the invaders and the Palestinian authorities, but the deceived was not Herod and Phasaël, but Hyrcanus, who implicated the former in his disaster. Xorenazi's details are too accurate to have been based on a garbled, oral tradition; for example, he knows that Herod fled from Jerusalem, and has roughly correctly given the name of his fortress, Masada, as Masanda. He is well informed about the general course of events. If his traditions are garbled, they are in the main based on the account of Josephus. The difference from Josephus' account is most instructive: Josephus knows nothing of Armenian participation in the Parthian invasion, while for Xorenazi, that is the heart of the matter. The account of Xorenazi was probably based on an extremely well-preserved Armenian *version* of Josephus, which differed from the original in that it included substantial details on Armenian "history." One can hardly expect that the Armenians would have preserved historical accounts of no consequence for Armenian history. No other people in antiquity did so. They did, however, preserve accounts of their own past, somewhat different in detail from those from which they had been copied, but nonetheless substantially conforming to what the Armenians thought had happened. The very divergences from Josephus are, therefore, highly instructive, for they give us an insight into how Armenians modified a fairly well-known account of a famous event for the purposes of transmission in Armenian historical memory. However, one point is absolutely beyond question: Xorenazi himself believed this account to have been valid; if he knew Josephus' account, he probably thought that *it* was garbled; but he did not, in any case, invent his account. Xorenazi was a historian writing history; here again we see that his errors are as instructive as his accuracies.

*E. The House of Monabazes and the Coming of the Amaduni to Armenia*

Xorenazi provides another tradition of considerable interest. He reports (II, 57) that a further Jewish group came to Armenia at the time of Trajan's invasion of Armenia during the reign of Ardashes. The Amaduni allegedly came to Armenia from the eastern part of the country of the Arik. It was a family of Jewish origin, descended from a certain Manue. The name of Samson was carried by his son, as it was "a Jewish custom to give the name of their ancestors to their descendants, in the hope that these names would be suitably applied."<sup>1</sup> The Amaduni had risen in honor in the country of the Arik, near Ahmadan (Hamadan). Why, Xorenazi asks, did they migrate here? He does not know. But they were well received, and are known today

<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest Christians in Adiabene was named Samson, see below, p. 355.

as an important noble family. The Persians still call them Manuyans after the name of their ancestor. I cannot explain the name Amaduni. Manue, however, is obviously the Armenian form of the well-known name Monobases [Μονόβαζος = מונבז] which exists also in Parthian; the Parthian form is MaNaWaZ, and the Armenian is thus an imperfect representation of its consonantal form.<sup>1</sup> One thinks of Monobases, father of the Jewish king of Adiabene, Izates; and again, of Izates' brother Monobases, who came to the throne shortly after 60 A.D. Our information on the Adiabenean royal family after its conversion to Judaism ends with the Jewish War of 66-73.<sup>2</sup> However, the persistence of the name Monobases would suggest that Xorenazi's legend of the newcomers under Manue may be relevant to the later history of the Adiabenean royal family. According to this legend, the Adiabeneans would have fled eastward, and, shortly after Trajan's invasion, northwestward into Armenia itself. Such a movement certainly conforms to what we know of the Adiabenean situation at the time of Trajan's invasion. The royal family opposed Trajan when he occupied the country. Having to flee, they could not have turned northward, because Trajan had already subdued Armenia, but would have had to go to the east, to Hamadan/Ecbatana (the Parthians' summer capital) to escape the Roman legions. After Trajan's retreat, however, the house of Monobases could have taken refuge in Armenia, where, as a royal household, it would have been received with respect. Why, by this hypothesis, did the royal family not return to Adiabene? One may only conjecture that after fleeing, the house of Monobases was replaced by another noble family, which might have found it easy to retain the throne, the Jewish nobles having antagonized a large part of the population on account of their conversion. It is perfectly evident that Xorenazi's tradition on the flight of the house of Monobases preserves accurately names which we know to have been Jewish, in particular that of Monbaz/Monobases, and details which conform to, and in no way contradict, other information available to us on the same subject. But we cannot conclude on that basis that the account is historically reliable, and I offer this conjecture very hesitantly.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Hildesheim, 1963), s.v. Manavaz, p. 189. It is true that Manavaz was also a son of Hayk, but this particular MNVZ was a foreigner, not an Armenian, and the connection with the well-known Monobases is more reasonable than any other. Note the Parthian form, on a coin, cited by Justi. Mr. E. V. Gulbekian kindly adds the following:

"This name exists in Armenian also as 'Manavaz' (Movses Khorenatsi: *History of the Armenians* Bk I, 12) from whom derived traditionally the Manavazyan clan (*ibid.*). The name is abridged to 'Manaz' in the city name 'Manazkert' (= built by Manavaz).

"Both Manavaz and Manué appear to be derived from the Urartian royal name Menua/Menuas."

See also E. Benveniste, *Titres et noms propres en iranien ancien* (Paris, 1966), p. 115, "Μονό-βαζος, probablement parthe, ne retrouve sa forme originale que par le rapprochement de la forme arménienne MANAWAZ."

<sup>2</sup> See Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.2.2, Tacitus 15.1.14, etc. Full discussion of the conversion of Adiabene is in Vol. I, 58-63.

<sup>3</sup> See below, pp. 354-358.

## VI. CHRISTIANITY IN ADIABENE

By the time of Trajan's invasion of Adiabene in 115 or 116,<sup>1</sup> the satrapy had been ruled by a Jewish dynasty for more than seventy-five years.<sup>2</sup> According to the Chronicle of Arbela<sup>3</sup> Christianity firmly rooted itself in Adiabene in Trajan's time. This tradition has been rejected by several historians, most notably F. C. Burkitt.<sup>4</sup>

## VII. THE ARBELA TRADITION

The Chronicle of Arbela, which was written in the 6th century by Mešihazekha, tells us that Pekidha was the first bishop of Adiabene, and Samson the second, the latter serving for seven years after the siege of Trajan. The source for these statements, Abel the Teacher, provided additional data of Parthian times (p. 11).<sup>5</sup> Since Samson was martyred by Xosroes in 123, the Chronicle apparently assumes that Christianity reached the satrapy about 100 A.D., according to Sachau (p. 13), who considers the tradition sound. He points out that Abel had access to the archives of the Arbela diocese. The following two centuries (123-316 A.D.) saw the following bishops in Arbela:

Isaac . . . . 13 years	'Ebedhmešihā . . . 35 years
Abraham . . . 15 years	Hairan . . . . . 33 years
Noah . . . . 16 years	Šahlupha . . . . 15 years
Vakanz . . . . 4 years	Aḥadhabhuhi . . . 18 years
Abel . . . . . — years	Seri'a . . . . . — years

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the difficult problems of chronology and strategy, see F. A. Lepper, *Trajan's Parthian War*, (Oxford, 1948). Lepper questions whether Trajan even meant to make a province of Assyria out of Adiabene (p. 152), following V. Chapot and E. Albertini. Compare David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton 1950), p. 608, 672-3, 686, 1554. See also Vol. I, pp. 70-72.

<sup>2</sup> The king in Trajan's time was apparently called Mebarsapes according to Dio 68.22.2. Justi (*Iranisches Namenbuch*, p. 202) knows of no other examples of the name. See Vol. I, pp. 58-64.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Eduard Sachau, *Die Chronik von Arbela* (Berlin, 1915), (in the *Sitzungsber. d. Preuss. Akad. d. Wiss., phil.-hist. Kl.*).

<sup>4</sup> F. C. Burkitt, "Syriac-Speaking Christianity," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, XII, pp. 493-6. Further discussion of Adiabene in the Parthian period will be found in N. Pigulevskaja, *Villes*, pp. 52-78, 113-115, 121, 173, 238, 243, and Louis Dillemann, *Haute Mésopotamie Orientale*, pp. 112, 273-286; on the Jews there p. 99, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Page references to the Arbela Chronicle follow Sachau.



As for the missing forty-four years, Sachau divides those years between the two the length of whose episcopates is not definitely known. Sachau concludes: "dass das Christentum jenseits des Tigris viel älter ist, als man bisher wissen konnte und vermutete, und dass seine ersten Anfänge ungefähr bis zu dem Jahre 100 n. Chr. hinaufreichen."

According to Abel the Teacher, Pekidha, the first bishop of Adiabene, had met the apostle Addai in person (p. 42). He was the son of a poor man, who was in the service of a Magus. But Pekidha was greatly impressed by a miracle of healing which Addai performed, and accepted his gospel, after several years of study returning to his native city to teach the new faith. After his death, six years passed before the bishop of Bet-Zabhdai, Mazra, came to Arbela with a caravan of merchants. He found the small Christian community and ordained Samson, the servant of Pekidha. Samson made many converts among Mazdeans, and was, as a result, martyred. His successor, Isaac, served a numerous community of Christians.

#### VIII. AN ARMENIAN TRADITION ON ADIABENE: SAMSON

As we have seen, Moses Xorenazi provides (II, 57) an interesting tradition about events in the time of Trajan's invasion, concerning the Amaduni.<sup>1</sup> What is especially interesting in this context is the fact that the name of Samson was, according to Xorenazi, particularly prized by this Jewish family. This same name was, as we have seen, associated with the Christian community of Arbela. On such a flimsy basis, one may only conclude that the ancient biblical hero held an important place in the imagination of Adiabenean Judaism and Christianity, for so the Arbela Chronicle explicitly states (Sachau trans, p. 44):

Der Simson des Alten Testamentes hat durch seine Kraft die Philister in die Flucht geschlagen und unterjocht, und der Simson des Neuen Testaments hat durch die Macht seines Herrn durch sein Fasten und seine Keuschheit die heidnischen Philister seiner Tage unterjocht und sie unter das Joch des Dienstes des Messias gespannt, da sie seine Bande nicht zerreißen konnten... Im Alten Testament hat er (sein Herr) seine Kraft gezeigt, im Neuen seine Gnade. Mögen seine Kraft und seine Gnade bei uns sein alle Tage.

But Samson played no analogous role in contemporary rabbinic Judaism, if the fact that no Talmudic rabbi ever bore the name is significant. According to J. Z. Lauterbach, "Even in the Talmudic period many seem to have denied that Samson was a historic figure; he was apparently regarded as a purely mythological personage."<sup>2</sup> If this is so, then one may have further reason for believing that Judaism in the northern part of the Mesopotamian valley differed substantially from that in the south.

#### IX. THE RELIABILITY OF THE ARBELA TRADITION

Oriental traditions are notoriously difficult to assess historically. That is

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> J. Z. Lauterbach, "Samson in Rabbinical Literature," *Jewish Encyclopedia* XI 1-2. See also Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1947), IV 47f. He was regarded as a profligate, and VI, 201 n. 101. Samson was held as one of the three least worthy of the judges. But I have not made a study of the matter.

no reason however either to accept them at face value, or to dismiss them out of hand. The Arbela Chronicler claimed that Christianity reached Adiabene before the fall of the Arsacids, and probably much before that, and presented episcopal records to show that by 224 A.D., there were already twenty bishops in eighty-one sees in the western satrapies of the Iranian Empire (though none in Nisibis or in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Sachau pp. 61-2). Whether the detailed accounts of individual bishops' lives are sound or not we shall never know. All we have is a tradition that Christianity took root very early in Adiabene. This tradition, on the face of it, is not unreasonable, even though its details pose difficulties. In the Roman Empire, Christianity found its earliest adherents among Hellenistic Jews, who were allegedly more willing to accept the Christian interpretation of prophetic promises than were Palestinian Jews. In the Parthian Empire,<sup>1</sup> Jews were no more literate in the Hebrew language and classical traditions than were those in Alexandria, for we know that translations of Scripture into "Elamite" and "Median" for Jewish readers were prepared in the Tannaitic period, according to b. Shab. 115a, where we are told that such translations, among others, may be saved from a fire on the Sabbath even though they may not be read. It is not unreasonable to suppose that such Jews, like similar ones in the Hellenistic world, would have provided a promising audience for Christian missionaries. Nor is it far-fetched to infer that Adiabeniens, who were influenced by the newly-converted Jews of the royal house, and who did not have among them rabbinical authorities to present a competing viewpoint, similarly adopted the new faith, though Xorenazî's tradition suggests that the house of Monobazes itself did not. We hear that in Edessa, Jews were Addai's first followers, and gained for him a hearing before King Abgar.<sup>2</sup> Likewise in Adiabene the presence of Jews must have facilitated the establishment of Christianity.

F. C. Burkitt dates the mission of Addai in Edessa at the last third of the second century. Since Addai allegedly played the same role in the foundation of Adiabeni Christianity by converting Pekidha, Burkitt rejects the chronology of the Arbela chronicle. He says that the names of the bishops may be genuine, but the lengths of their episcopates and the serious gaps between them "seemed designed to bring up the establishment of the mission into early post-apostolic times. That a Syriac-speaking Christianity was introduced into Adiabene and that there were bishops in Arbela before the collapse of the Parthian Empire may be granted, but it is all subsequent to the conversion of the king of Edessa."<sup>3</sup> One may always argue about how fictitious episcopal lists may be, for there is massive evidence that such lists were intended to demonstrate that the several churches that preserved them date back to apostolic times. Yet skepticism should apply with equal force in

<sup>1</sup> On Acts 2.9, see Ernst Hânen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1959), pp. 133-5; F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity, I, The Acts of the Apostles in English Translation and Commentary* by Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury (London, 1933), pp. 18-20. The verse means "everywhere under heaven" and proves nothing about Christian progress in the east.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, pp. 166-9.

<sup>3</sup> Cited above, p. 355, n. 4.

studying *all* traditions. One cannot very well accept the historicity of the Edessan traditions to the extent that Addai is treated as a wholly credible historical figure, on the one hand, and at the same time deny the historicity of the Arbela account because this same Addai figures in it and thus seems to present an anachronism, on the other. We ought not to place too great stress on the participation by Addai himself in the conversion of the first Christians in Adiabene. One should keep in mind that three personalities were *invariably* associated with the early apostolate to Mesopotamian lands, Thomas, who went on to India, Addai, and Mar Mari.<sup>1</sup> It was perfectly natural for the Adiabenean church to associate the name of Addai with the conversion of the satrapy. Yet that fiction—if it was a fiction—does not disqualify the more fundamental tradition, preserved by the Adiabenean see, that Christianity reached Arbela about the time of Trajan.

I think it more reasonable to reassess the Addai tradition in the Edessan church. As Burkitt himself pointed out,<sup>2</sup> the two traditions surrounding Addai's conversion of Edessa themselves exhibit fundamental contradictions. One of these traditions placed Addai and Abgar in the time of Jesus himself, and both of them exhibit chronological difficulties of the sort which Burkitt cites in rejecting the Arbela tradition. According to the tradition that Addai and Abgar were Jesus's contemporaries, Addai could *well* have gone on to Adiabene before 100 A.D. The literary evidence does not, therefore, decisively *prove* that Addai's coming to Adiabene *had* to antedate his appearance at Edessa. I do not for one minute suggest that these traditions are sound. I merely hold that the Edessan traditions are by no means sufficiently consistent or chronologically convincing to force us to reject the Arbela one which places the conversion of the first Christians there at about 100 A.D., if that tradition seems on *other* grounds to be plausible. It is, in my opinion, entirely plausible. What probably happened is that Christianity reached Adiabene in much the same way as it reached Edessa, namely, through the adherence of some of the local Jewish community to the new faith. In both places the presence of Judaism must have been decisive, for, when all is said and done, these are the *only* eastern churches which claimed to date as far back as 100 A.D., (though they were not alone in claiming apostolic succession) and in both of these cities there existed considerable Jewries.

Yet the character of Judaism in the two places must have been equally important. Christianity made no progress at all in nearby Nisibis during Parthian times, nor was there a bishop in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, at the heart of Babylonia, before the early fourth century, as we have seen.<sup>3</sup> What these two centers had in common was the presence of important Tannaitic academies. That in Nisibis was headed by R. Judah b. Bathyra through much

<sup>1</sup> See B. Spuler, "Die Nestorianische Kirche," *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed. B. Spuler, et al., VIII, *Religion*, ii. *Religionsgeschichte des Orients in der Zeit der Weltreligionen* (Leiden and Cologne, 1961), p. 120. Spuler also cites Mar Mari, but he lived much later than the period under discussion. See also W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im Ältesten Christentum*, *pass.*

<sup>2</sup> F. C. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity* (London, 1904), pp. 1-39.

<sup>3</sup> Above, pp. 10-16.



of the second century, and from ca. 135 to ca. 145, the most important students of R. 'Aqiba lived there as well. There were Tannaitic authorities in Babylonia as well, and an academy was founded by the disciples of R. Ishmael in Huzal, where Babylonian Tannaitic authorities such as R. Aḥai b. R. Josiah, R. Hiyya, Issi b. Judah, and Samuel studied.<sup>1</sup> Thus it may reasonably be inferred that where Tannaitic Judaism was strong among Jews in the Parthian Empire, there Christianity made little progress, while where Tannaitic Judaism was weak, or where the authority of the Tannaim did not reach, as in Edessa, Adiabene, and probably also Dura, there Christianity found a sympathetic hearing among the Jews. How shall we understand these facts? They indicate the penetration of an undifferentiated Jewish population by rival, organized parties at pretty much the same time. To say that one or another group 'failed to make headway' is probably misleading. What must have happened is that where Pharisaism established itself, it shut out Christianity, just as Christianity excluded Pharisaism if it preceded the arrival of a rabbinical school. The two parties, Pharisaism and Christianity, shaped the pre-existing "Judaism" to suit their respective purposes. What did that "Judaism" consist of? One may suppose that it centered upon Yahwism, the Temple and synagogue cult, and Scriptures. The Adiabenean royal family had, seventy-five years earlier, accepted some form of pre-rabbinic Judaism, focussed upon the Bible<sup>2</sup> and the Temple, and held in common by the masses of the Jews in northern Mesopotamia and in Babylonia. It was, as we have seen, a long time before the masses of Jews conformed to the rabbinical laws and doctrines, and in the meanwhile, numbers of them had already opted for the Christian alternative.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pp. 113-163.

<sup>2</sup> See also Paul E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (second edition, Oxford, 1959), 265-283. I am not qualified to comment upon Kahle's thesis that the Peshitta was prepared for the Jewish community of Adiabene and then adopted by the Christians who broke off from it. Kahle states flatly, "We can take it for granted that at least parts of a Syriac Old Testament and in the first instance the Torah were introduced into Adiabene during the time of its Jewish kings, i.e. in the middle of the first century B.C." (P. 272). (I assume "B.C." is a typographical error, for on the preceding page, Kahle is perfectly clear on the chronology of the house of Monobazes.) It does seem to me that such a translation would have had to be prepared very rapidly. The royal family converted about 40 A.D., and if Kahle is correct in holding that the last king of the dynasty fell before Trajan, and further, that "the Jewish interests of the dynasty disappeared after A.D. 70," then the translation would have been made sometime between 40 and ca. 65. On the Armenian version of the Addai legend, see Kahle, pp. 280-283. In order to reject Burkitt's chronology for the Christianization of Adiabene, Kahle holds the Addai chronicle is of no historical value, just as Burkitt rejects the Adiabene chronicle in order to substantiate the legend of Addai. I am much indebted to Professor M. Delcor, University of Toulouse, for calling to my attention the above book.